MARVEL COMICS

PETER PARKER SPIDER-MAN

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#16

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IT'S VENOM VS THE SANDMAN!

MACKIE
ROMITA JR
HANNA

DIRECT EDITION

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AND NO MATTER WHO WINS-- THE CITY & SPIDER-MAN LOSE!

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SOME WEBBING.

SOME PUNCHING.

A FLIP HERE...A SPLAT THERE... THWACK...BOOM...

HOWARD MACKIE
Story
from an idea by:
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JOHN ROMITA JR
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GREGORY WRIGHT
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RICHARD S & COMICRAFT'S TROY PETERI
Letters
RALPH MACCHIO
Editor
BOB HARRAS
Chief

Cliché

AT A DEMONSTRATION ON RADIATION, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PETER PARKER WAS BITTEN BY AN IRRADIATED SPIDER FROM WHICH HE GAINED THE ARACHNID'S INCREDIBLE ABILITIES. WHEN A BURGLAR KILLED HIS BELOVED UNCLE BEN, A GRIEF-STRICKEN PETER VOWED TO USE HIS GREAT POWERS IN THE SERVICE OF HIS FELLOW MAN, BECAUSE HE LEARNED AN INVALUABLE LESSON: WITH GREAT POWER MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. STAN LEE PRESENTS:

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN!

OH...AND THERE'S A SURPRISE! EVERYONE THINKS I'M THE BAD GUY!
AND I'LL BET YOU I JUST SAVED THEM SOME INCREASED ATM FEES...YOU WANT TO TALK SUPER-VILLAINS!
YEAH! SPIDER-MAN!
IT'S ALWAYS THE LITTLE KIDS THAT UNDERSTAND. IT'S LIKE THEY CAN SEE BENEATH THE MASK.
AH...NEW YORK'S FINEST!
THEY PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE EVERY SINGLE DAY... AND THEY DON'T HAVE ANY SUPER-POWERS.
THEY'RE THE REAL HEROES IN THIS CITY.
THEY'VE GOT IT TOUGH ENOUGH. AND I'VE GOT NO DESIRE TO HAVE A BATTLE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITIES.
GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN!
BANK ROBBERS!
I'VE GOT TO GET A REAL LIFE!

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?
HOME?

OH YEAH...THE LOVELY LITTLE ABODE THAT PASSES FOR HOME THESE DAYS.
TO THINK THAT JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO I WAS CONTENT IN MY LIFE.
MARRIED TO MARY JANE PARKER, ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL, SUCCESSFUL AND DESIROUS OF SUPERMODELS.

WE HAD A MIGHTY FINE LUXURY APARTMENT ON EASY STREET AND AN ENTIRE LIFE AHEAD OF US.
UH-OH...RIGHT ON SCHEDULE...THE IRATE LANDLORD OF THIS DIVE I'M HOLED UP IN...

PARKER! YOU'RE TWO DAYS LATE WITH THIS WEEK'S RENT! IF I DON'T GET IT TOMORROW...
YOU WILL, MR. MARTS. I PROMISE!

OH...I'VE NEVER BEEN IN THIS SITUATION BEFORE!
BUT, OF COURSE, SINCE THE MORE THINGS CHANGE THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME, THE NORMAL COLLECTION OF SUPER-VILLAINS, CRAZED SERIAL KILLERS AND BAD KARMA HAD TO CONSPIRE AGAINST US.
EVERYONE THINKS MJ'S DEAD. KILLED BY HER STALKER IN A PLANE EXPLOSION.
YEAH... RIGHT!
THEY SAID THAT ABOUT MY AUNT MAY AND MY ARCH FOE, NORMAN "YOU CAN CALL ME THE GREEN GOBLIN" OSBORN TOO!

I KNOW BETTER.
THEY ALWAYS COME BACK. OR...AM I JUST FOOLING MYSELF?

NO. I JUST HAVEN'T FIGURED WHICH OF MY EVER-RETURNING SUPER-VILLAINS IS BEHIND HER DISAPPEARANCE YET.
MILK

I WILL.

PLOP

I WASN'T THAT HUNGRY, ANYWAY!

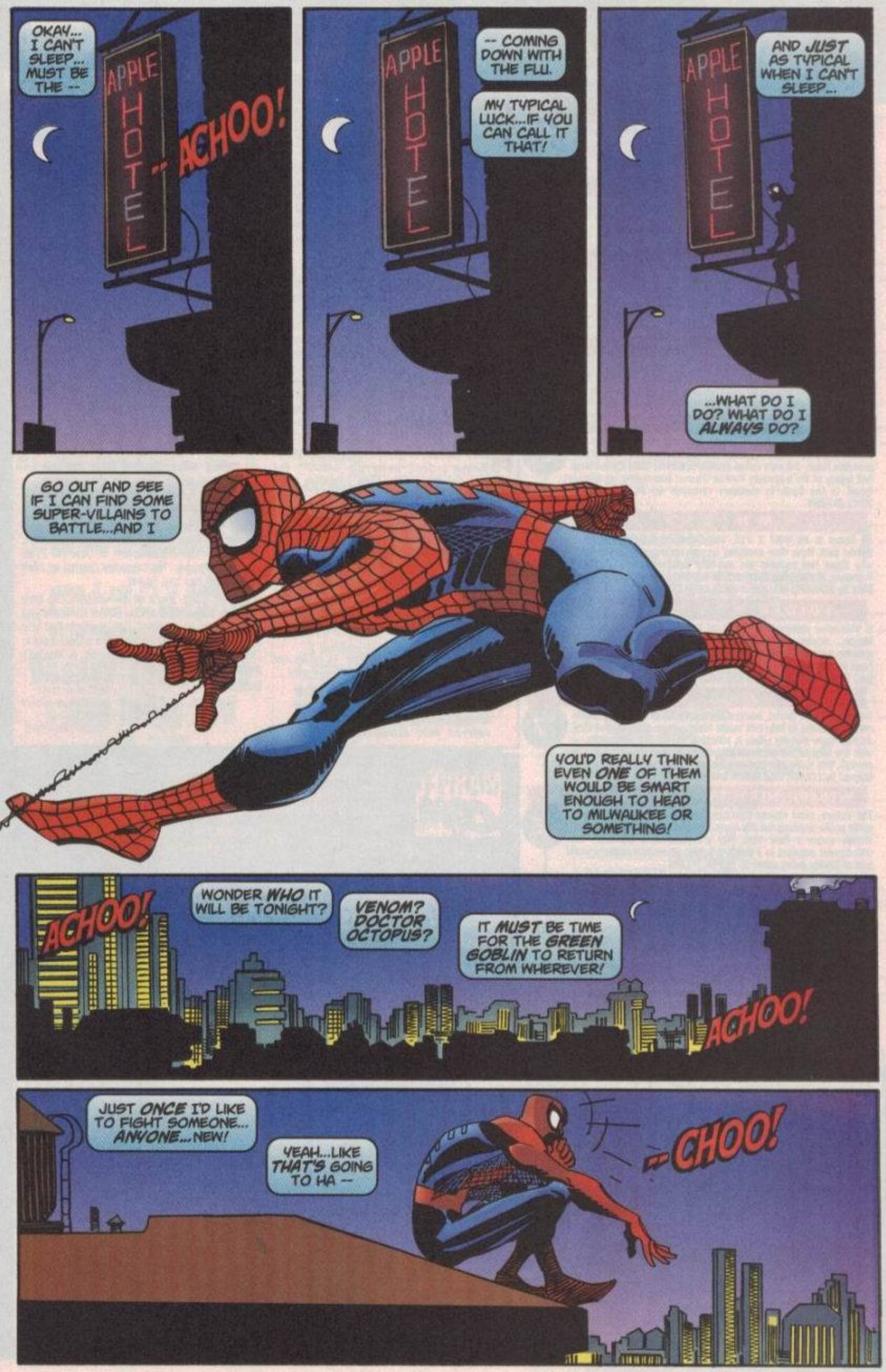
MAYBE SOME REST IS WHAT I NEED.

FIGURE SOME WAY TO TURN MY LIFE AROUND, BREAK OUT OF THE RUT AND REDEFINE WHO I AM.
I WISH MJ WAS HERE FOR THIS.
SHE WAS NEVER TOO CRAZY ABOUT THE WHOLE COSTUMED SUPER-HERO THING... IT DID PLAY HAVOC WITH OUR SOCIAL LIFE, BUT...
...SHE WOULD LOVE THAT I'VE FINALLY REALIZED THAT I'M JUST A KID REALLY AND MY LIFE SHOULDN'T BE FILLED WITH THIS MANY CHOICES.

GOOD NIGHT, MJ. I MISS YOU.
I'M GOING TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER AND FIND YOU SOO --

KRAK
THUMP

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN!


OKAY... I CAN'T SLEEP... MUST BE THE --
APPLE HOTEL
-- ACHOO!
-- COMING DOWN WITH THE FLU.
MY TYPICAL LUCK...IF YOU CAN CALL IT THAT!
AND JUST AS TYPICAL WHEN I CAN'T SLEEP...
...WHAT DO I DO? WHAT DO I ALWAYS DO?
GO OUT AND SEE IF I CAN FIND SOME SUPER-VILLAINS TO BATTLE...AND I
YOU'D REALLY THINK EVEN ONE OF THEM WOULD BE SMART ENOUGH TO HEAD TO MILWAUKEE OR SOMETHING!
ACHOO!
WONDER WHO IT WILL BE TONIGHT?
VENOM? DOCTOR OCTOPUS?
IT MUST BE TIME FOR THE GREEN GOBLIN TO RETURN FROM WHEREVER!
ACHOO!
JUST ONCE I'D LIKE TO FIGHT SOMEONE... ANYONE...NEW!
YEAH...LIKE THAT'S GOING TO HA --
-- CHOO!

SPLOOSH
WHAT THE --?!
PHEW! SOME SORT OF BLACK SMELLY STUFF! ALMOST LIKE --
LIKE INK, SPIDER-MAN?
THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IT IS! COURTESY OF... THE SQUID!
SAVE SOME OF HIM FOR ME, SQUIDDY!
YOU KNOW HOW I DO LIKE A GOOD TUSSLE!
OF COURSE I DO... AND I WILL, MS. FORTUNE!
WHAT?!
OH, COME ON! THE SQUID? MS. FORTUNE?
I THOUGHT ALL THE LAME NAMES HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN!
DON'T YOU PEOPLE KNOW THAT CUTESY ANIMAL NAMES AND NAMES BASED ON BAD PUNS ARE A THING OF THE PAST?
YOU SAVE THAT KIND OF THING FOR THE COMIC STRIPS!
NOW...AS MUCH AS I WAS HOPING FOR SOMEONE NEW TO BATTLE...
ACHOO!
I'M NOT EVEN IN THE MOOD TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUR POWERS ARE OR WHY YOU EVEN TARGETED ME.
THOUGH I DO HAVE MY SUSPICIONS!

NOT EVEN MY NEW VILLAINS CAN BE COMPLETELY ORIGINAL.
MAYBE I'VE JUST BEEN DOING THIS SUPER HERO THING FOR TOO LONG!
PHEW! THIS STUFF STINKS! HOW AM I GOING TO GET IT --
-- OH, BOY.
CAN I BREAK HIM NOW, RAZOR WIRE? HE HURTED MS. FORTUNE AND THE SQUID.
HOLD FAST, OGRE, MY OVERLY MUSCLED FRIEND. THEY WERE NOT IN OUR LEAGUE AND THEIR FATES ARE OF NO CONCERN TO US.
WHAT DOES CONCERN US IS COLLECTING THE BOUNTY PLACED ON THE WEB-SLINGER'S HEAD.
PLUS, THE WAY WE'VE AGREED TO DO THINGS IN THE WICKED BRIGADE IS TO LET EVERYONE HAVE A FAIR SHOT.
DOESN'T OUR SILENT ASSOCIATE LIGHTNING FIST DESERVE HIS TURN TO EARN HIS FAIR SHARE OF THE BOUNTY?
THE WICKED BRIGADE? OGRE? LIGHTNING FIST? RAZOR WIRE?
WHAT...THE OFFICIAL ASSOCIATION OF THE LAME SUPER-VILLAINS HAD A DRAWING... AND YOU GUYS LOST?
I THINK HE'S MAKING FUN OF US, RAZOR! I DON'T LIKE THAT!
THEN... LET'S KILL HIM!
PLEASE, LORD... SAVE ME FROM HACKNEYED PLOT DEVICES!
A BOUNTY PLACED ON MY HEAD BY AN UNKNOWN ENEMY WHO HAS BROUGHT IN SUPER-VILLAINS I'VE NEVER HEARD OF BEFORE!

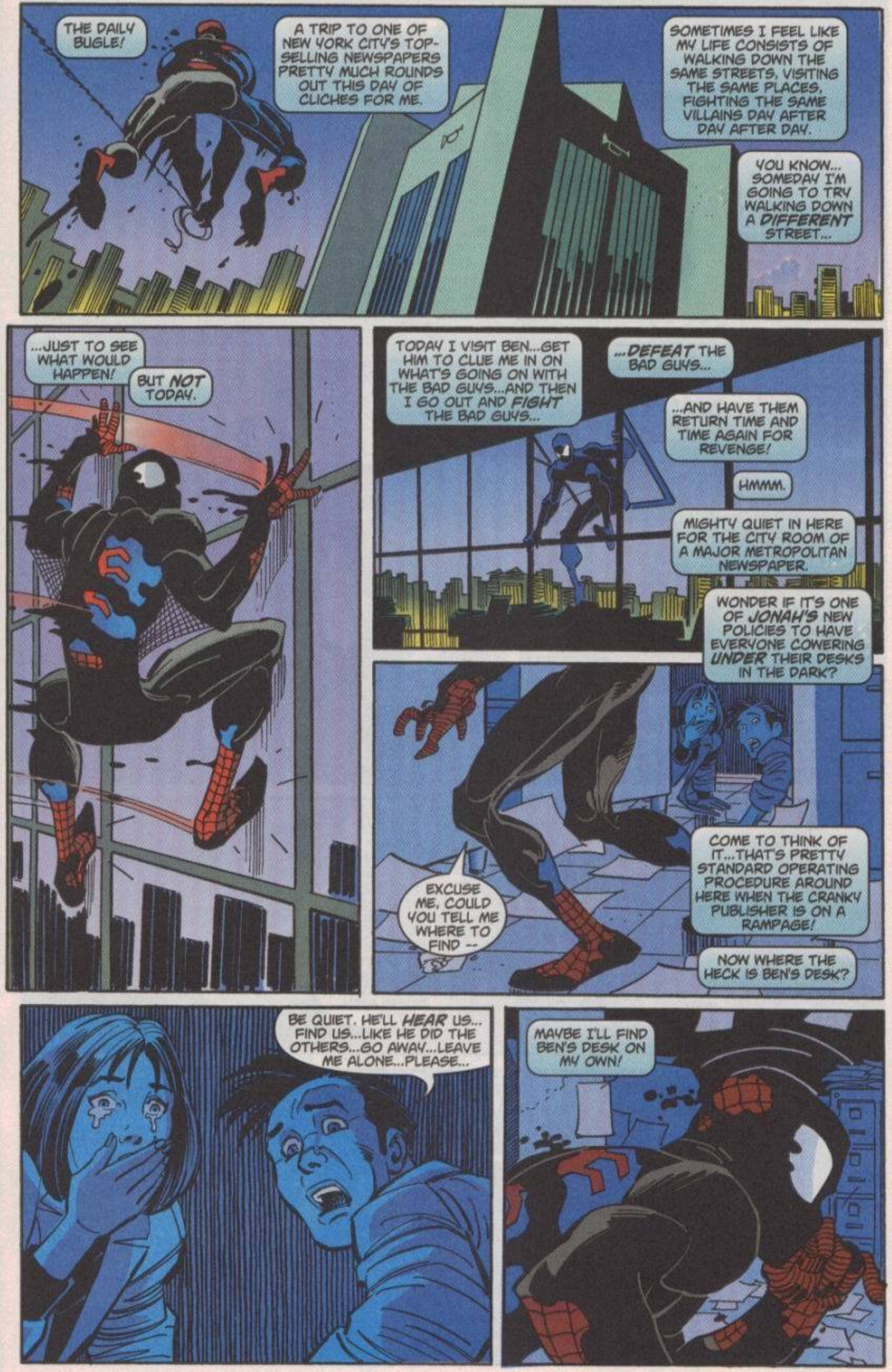
FRAKOOM

MASTER MONARCH, YOU HAVE TAKEN THEM ALL OUT OF THE FIGHT.
SHOULD WE GO AND FINISH THEM OFF FOR YOU?
I REQUIRE NO AID IN THIS ENDEAVOR...DESPITE THE AGITATOR'S INSISTENCE THAT YOU ACCOMPANY ME ON THIS MISSION.

NOT EVEN THE ARACHNID INTERESTS ME.
YOUR EMPLOYER REQUESTED MY AID WITH THE BIGGER PICTURE... AND NOW I HAVE BEGUN TO ATTEND TO IT.
STAY CLEAR AND IT WILL ALL BE RESOLVED... SOON.

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
MASTER MONARCH? I WONDER IF HE KNOWS HOW PEEVED DOCTOR DOOM IS GOING TO BE WHEN HE FINDS OUT THAT THE GUY IS RIFFING ON HIS COSTUME DESIGN?
I FEEL LIKE I'VE STEPPED INTO A READERS DIGEST VERSION OF A BAD DAY IN THE LIFE OF SPIDER-MAN!

HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED IN THE NEW YORK CRIME SCENE WHILE I WAS AWAY IN LATVERIA THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
I NEED SOME ANSWERS BEFORE I GO TOO MUCH FURTHER.
AND THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN WHO KNOWS ALL ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN NEW YORK'S UNDERWORLD... BEN URICH.
AND THE PLACE TO FIND HIM...?


THE DAILY BUGLE!
A TRIP TO ONE OF NEW YORK CITY'S TOP-SELLING NEWSPAPERS PRETTY MUCH ROUNDS OUT THIS DAY OF CLICHES FOR ME.
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE MY LIFE CONSISTS OF WALKING DOWN THE SAME STREETS, VISITING THE SAME PLACES, FIGHTING THE SAME VILLAINS DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY.
YOU KNOW... SOMEDAY I'M GOING TO TRY WALKING DOWN A DIFFERENT STREET...
...JUST TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN!
BUT NOT TODAY.
TODAY I VISIT BEN...GET HIM TO CLUE ME IN ON WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE BAD GUYS...AND THEN I GO OUT AND FIGHT THE BAD GUYS...
...DEFEAT THE BAD GUYS...
...AND HAVE THEM RETURN TIME AND TIME AGAIN FOR REVENGE!
HMMM.
MIGHTY QUIET IN HERE FOR THE CITY ROOM OF A MAJOR METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER.
WONDER IF IT'S ONE OF JONAH'S NEW POLICIES TO HAVE EVERYONE COWERING UNDER THEIR DESKS IN THE DARK?
EXCUSE ME, COULD YOU TELL ME WHERE TO FIND --
COME TO THINK OF IT...THAT'S PRETTY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AROUND HERE WHEN THE CRANKY PUBLISHER IS ON A RAMPAGE!
NOW WHERE THE HECK IS BEN'S DESK?
BE QUIET. HE'LL HEAR US... FIND US...LIKE HE DID THE OTHERS...GO AWAY...LEAVE ME ALONE...PLEASE...
MAYBE I'LL FIND BEN'S DESK ON MY OWN!

HELLO THERE, MR. URICH.
NICE COSTUME. DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE GOING BACK TO THE BLACK ONE -- PHEW!
SORRY. HAD A RUN-IN WITH A GUY WITH A MALODOROUS LITTLE POWER.
"MALODOROUS"? VERY IMPRESSIVE.

ANYWAY...GLAD TO SEE YOU HERE. NO OFFENSE, BUT I WOULD HAVE BEEN GLAD TO SEE ANY HERO SHOWING UP.
THOUGHT WE'D HAVE TO SIT HERE ALL NIGHT WHILE HE PLAYED HIS MIND GAMES WITH US.
HE WHO, BEN?

VENOM.
OY! THIS CLICHE I COULD LIVE WITHOUT. WHAT DOES HE WANT?

NOT SURE. BUT AN EDUCATED GUESS WOULD SAY IT'S JONAH.
FUNNY THING IS...ONCE...VENOM SHOWED UP...JONAH DISAPPEARED.

FIGURES.
HE'S BEEN PLAYING GAMES WITH US. THE PHONES ARE ALL DEAD. THE EXITS ARE SEALED...
...EVERY ONCE IN AWHILE SOMEONE DISAPPEARS. WE HEAR THEM SCREAMING AND THEN... NOTHING.
I DON'T WANT TO EVEN THINK WHAT HE'S DOING WITH THEM.

I THINK MAYBE -- ACHOO!
BLESS YOU!
THANK YOU...?

HI, EDDIE! LONG TIME NO --

MY *SYMBIOTE* AND I HAVE NO TIME FOR A FIGHT WITH YOU! WE'VE GOT BIGGER FISH TO FRY!

YEAH... THAT MAY BE, AND I'D *LOVE* TO GO ALONG WITH THE WISHES OF YOUR LIVING COSTUME, BUT...

DON'T SAY IT. PLEASE DON'T SAY IT!

...TIME TO FIGHT!

UGPH!

NOT UP TO SNUFF TODAY, VENNY?

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING...

...A COUPLE OF DOZEN *CLONES* ARE BOUND TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE ANY MINUTE NOW.

OKAY!
HOW ABOUT I JUST *DO* IT FOR A CHANGE!
THAT WOULD BE *DIFFERENT* FOR *BOTH* OF US!

OOLPH!
ACK!
YOU KNOW, VENOM, *NOW* MIGHT BE THE TIME FOR YOU TO CONSIDER BECOMING ONE OF THE *GOOD* GUYS!
WHAT?!
OH, YEAH! IT'S VERY POPULAR RIGHT NOW. YOU DO SOME SERIOUS SOUL-SEARCHING, GIVE UP THE SUPER-VILLAIN LIFE AND WALK ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS.
I SEE A MINI-SERIES ON CABLE. "THE MANY LIVES OF A LETHAL PROTECTOR."
BASH

THANKS, BUT NO.
I'VE DONE THAT *WAY* TOO MANY TIMES RECENTLY.
SO...WHY COME AFTER JONAH, VENOM? WHERE'S THE CHALLENGE?

DOES ANYONE EVER REALLY *BUY* THAT KIND OF THING?

AAARGH!

NAH! BUT IT *IS* CLASSIC. EVERYONE IS SUSPICIOUS AND WAITS AROUND TO SEE WHEN HE'LL TURN BAD AGAIN. THE TRICK IS YOU *WAIT* UNTIL THEY *TRUST* YOU TO GO BAD! WHAT DO YOU THINK?

NAH! THOUGH I *AM* PLANNING ON HUNTING DOWN AND KILLING *ALL* OF THE SINISTER SIX! SO, *YOU* DO THE CLASSIC GOOD GUY STUCK BETWEEN TWO VILLAINS THING.

BOOM

HAH! JONAH? IS *THAT* WHO YOU THOUGHT WE WERE AFTER?

IT'S *NOT* JONAH? THEN *WHO?*

I'M THINKING IT WAS...

...ME!
SANDMAN?!
YEAH! HE'S BEEN CHASING ME ALL AROUND TOWN...THE GUY IS ONE SICK PUPPY!
I WASN'T SURE I COULD HANDLE HIM IN A SOLO FLIGHT, SO I THOUGHT MAYBE IF I FOUND YOU...
SO, I CAME UP HERE, KILLED THE LIGHTS AND HID IN THE VENTILATION SYSTEM...AND HERE YOU ARE!
NOW LET'S FINISH HIM OFF TOGETHER!
WHAT?
DIDN'T YOU JUST HEAR ME TELL HIM I'M NOT GOING TO GET CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE?
YEAH, BUT C'MON... VENOM? IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S A RUN OF THE MILL BAD GUY! THE GUY IS A SICKO SERIAL KILLER!
WOULD IT KILL YA JUST TO HELP ME PUT HIM OUTTA COMMISSION. HE'S GOT A SERIOUS JONES FOR KILLIN' ME AND THE REST OF THE SINISTER SIX FOR SOME REASON.
BECAUSE YOU ALL DESERVE TO DIE FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? ALL WE DID WAS EMBARRASS YOU A LITTLE.
WELL I GOT NEWS FOR YOU...YOU AIN'T GETTIN' A PIECE OF ME, BUDDY! MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO AFTER THE VULTURE... HE SEEMS LIKE AN EASIER MARK.
ALL IN GOOD TIME, BUT UNTIL THEN...
...A PIECE OF YOU SOUNDS LIKE A VERY GOOD IDEA!
ARRGH! WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?

RIGHT NOW?
SWALLOWING. MMM! TASTY. I REALLY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ROUGHAGE IN MY DIET.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?

I CAN'T LOSE ANY OF MY SAND MASS... IT'LL...IT'LL...I'LL FALL APART IF...I...

GUESS WE'VE GOT TIME FOR YOU AFTER ALL, SPIDER-MAN!
WE'LL MAKE IT A QUICK ONE. WE HATE TO DINE AND DASH, BUT THERE ARE FIVE MORE OF THE SINISTER SIX LEFT TO KILL!
URK!

SPIDER-MAN! CATCH!
CLIK

ARGH! FIRE!
YOU KNOW MY SYMBIOTIC OTHER CANNOT TOLERATE FIRE!

YES...I KNOW.
BECAUSE EVERY OTHER TIME I BEAT YOU THE SAME WAY!
IT REALLY IS ALL BECOMING SO TEDIOUS!
THOUGH...THIS IS THE MOST ENJOYMENT I'VE GOTTEN OUT OF THE BUGLE IN SOME TIME!
NO IT CAN'T END THIS WAY!
NOT WHEN WE WERE SO CLOSE!
YES.
IT CAN.
THIS TIME AND, I'M SURE...
...DOZENS OF TIMES IN THE FUTURE!

WE WILL BE BACK, SPIDER-MAN!
YOU'LL SEE!
AND THE NEXT TIME --
YOU'LL EAT MY BRAINS!
I'M SCARED.
I SAVE THE DAY...
...AND BEN GETS THE CREDIT. GOOD FOR HIM. HE DESERVES IT.
JUST ABOUT NOW WE SHOULD HAVE... 3, 2, 1 --
WHERE IS HE! WHERE IS THAT COWARD, SPIDER-MAN!
LOOK WHAT YOU DID TO THIS PLACE!
J. JONAH JAMESON, DAILY BUGLE PUBLISHER AND MY OWN PERSONAL NIGHTMARE!
I'LL HAVE YOUR HIDE FOR THIS! SOMEONE CALL THE POLICE! 911!
HEARD IT ALL BEFORE.
THERE REALLY ISN'T ANYTHING NEW.
WHY DO I DO IT?
THIS MUST BE WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW I LEARNED THAT WITH GREAT POWER --
-- NO! I AM NOT GOING TO SAY IT!
OMIGOSH! AUNT MAY!
I WAS SUPPOSED TO PICK HER UP IN QUEENS AND TAKE HER TO A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT.
WHAT HAVE I DONE?
PUT DOWN THAT PHONE! YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW BY --

BE QUIET. I'M TRYING TO TALK HERE.
SPLOOSH
HMMMPH!
HI. IT'S ME. I'M SORRY THAT I --
HOW ARE YOU FEELING? HOW'S YOUR HEART? I'M SO SORRY THAT I FORGOT TO COME TAKE YOU TO THE DOCTOR, BUT I --
PETER, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR. THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT ISN'T UNTIL TOMORROW. I'M FEELING AS HEALTHY AS A HORSE...
...AND, AS I'VE TOLD YOU, I AM PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF GETTING THERE BY MYSELF.
NOW, I'D LOVE TO TALK MORE, BUT I'VE GOT A GENTLEMEN CALLER BY FOR LUNCH. BYE.
WELL THAT IS ONE CLICHE I AM GLAD DIDN'T PAN OUT.
BUT IT'S ALL BECOMING TOO PREDICTABLE.

I KNOW MARY JANE WILL COME BACK.
I KNOW. DESPITE ALL THE TRAGEDY IN MY LIFE -- I'LL FIND A WAY TO SURVIVE.

I KNOW NORMAN, THE GREEN GOBLIN, DOCTOR OCTOPUS AND ALL THE OTHER ROGUES GALLERY I FACE DAY AFTER DAY WILL COME BACK TO MAKE MY LIFE MISERABLE.
I WANT A CHANGE.
I NEED A CHANGE.
IF ONLY I WASN'T SPIDER-MAN.

ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS GET RID OF THE COSTUME AND --

-- NAH!
BEEN THERE... DONE THAT!

BEING SPIDER-MAN IS KINDA COOL!

I'M HEADING BACK HOME. GONNA CLIMB IN UNDER THE COVERS AND HOPE THIS DAY OF CLICHES PASSES.
SEEMS LIKE THE ONLY THING THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN WAS A CASE OF HERO VERSUS HERO OVER SOME SILLY MISTAKE!
FWAM

WHY THOSE WERE MY FAVORITE JELLY DONUTS!
AND THE SHOP WAS ALL OUTTA THEM!
IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
SHEESH!
THE END
TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SANDMAN, PICK UP NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE OF AMAZING SPIDER-MAN#17.
ON SALE SOON!